



Testimony Concerning SB 0533

Education - Teacher Certification - Montessori Schools
Submitted to Education, Health & Environmental Affairs
Senator Paul Pinsky, Chair

February 18, 2020

Position: Support

Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School (BMPCS) strongly supports SB0533. BMPCS is a mission-driven school in the urban heart of Baltimore City's Arts and Entertainment District. Founded in 2008, we serve a diverse and vibrant community of 450 students aged 3 through 8th grade. Our school features a Seed to Table program, a beautiful outdoor environment, a recently rehabilitated historic building, a talented and dedicated staff, a supportive and visionary administration, and a dynamic and engaged parent community. With an annual waiting list of over 1000 students, Baltimore Montessori Public is Baltimore City's only public Montessori school.

This bill will create a much needed pathway to state teacher licensure for Montessori credentialed teachers which will, in turn increase access to high quality authentic Montessori programs for children from all backgrounds throughout our state. Currently, Maryland's certification process does not recognize the Montessori credential as part of a pathway to state certification and finding qualified teachers who are Montessori credentialed *and* meet Maryland's teaching certification requirements remains a challenge for many Montessori schools; the pipeline for these teachers is significantly strained in the public sector due to the double certification requirement.

We often have to hire non-Montessori trained teachers which means we are actually putting teachers in a learning environment for which they are not properly prepared. It also means that we are dedicating funds to pay for Montessori certification programs, that otherwise would be allocated to the classrooms. When we hire Montessori certified teachers via a conditional state certificate, this means our teachers are taking 12 - 15 additional college credits a year to meet the requirements while fulfilling their full-time job responsibilities in the classroom. They also start at a lower salary which causes an additional strain on our teachers and impacts teacher recruitment and retention. Both scenarios are not ideal for ensuring our students consistently have the resources and support they need. It also limits the pool and diversity of potential candidates that we can bring into our school.

We believe that all of our schools need highly qualified teachers in our classrooms. Montessori teacher preparation entails a rigorous graduate level course of study that covers child-development, curriculum and level specific subject matter, observation and assessment, supports for learning differences and culturally responsive teaching as well as significant practice teaching and observation. This bill would merely expand certification requirements to include these already highly qualified teaching professionals.

We urge a positive report on SB 0533. Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Shecter".

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